

The Scholarly Journey of Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf Al-Ouarglani to Al-Andalus during the Almohad Period: A Study of His Life and Scholarly Career

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Abstract

This research examines the biographical and scientific career of Abu Yaqub Yusuf ibn Ibrahim al-Ouarglani (570 AH/1174 AD), beginning with his early education in the region of Ouarglani, where he learned the principles of traditional and linguistic sciences within the educational system known as "Halqa al-Azaba". The study highlights his period of scholarly emigration to Andalusia in the sixth century AH as the starting point for his methodological transformation, during which he settled in the cities of Cordoba and Seville during the Almohad era, a period that witnessed the flourishing of the sciences of logic, principles and arithmetic.

The research details how al-Ouarglani employed these "rational sciences" in reformulating the Ibadhi jurisprudential and hadith code after his return to his homeland, which was embodied in his classification of the book "Tartib al-Musnad" according to modern jurisprudential categorisation, and the book "Al-Dalil wa al-Burhan".

The study concludes that al-Ouarglani's experience formed a structural link that transferred the scientific school of al-Ouarglani from the stage of oral narration and memorisation to the stage of systematic documentation and fundamental investigation.

Keywords : Al-Ouarglani; Halqa al-Azaba; Andalusia ; Cordoba ; Tartib al-Musnad.

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I. Introduction

During the fifth and sixth centuries AH, scholars and students from Central Maghreb—like their counterparts from other regions of the Islamic world—undertook scholarly journeys in pursuit of knowledge to the major intellectual centers of the time, most notably Al-Andalus. These journeys played a fundamental role in strengthening the channels of cultural and intellectual exchange between the Central Maghreb and Al-Andalus. This interaction greatly contributed to the development of scientific and intellectual life in both regions. The cities of the Central Maghreb witnessed the settlement of a considerable number of Andalusian scholars, jurists, and men of learning who played a significant role in the flourishing of scholarly activity in urban centers such as Bijaya (Bejaia) and Tilimsan (Tlemcen). Likewise, Al-Andalus received numerous scholars from the Central Maghreb who travelled there seeking advanced learning.

The political unity established under the Almohad Caliphate facilitated these intellectual exchanges and created favorable conditions for the expansion of scholarly networks and scientific activity. Among the scholars who travelled to Al-Andalus during this period was the learned scholar Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf ibn Ibrahim al-Sadrati Al-Ouarglani, who moved to Qurtuba (Cordoba) during the sixth century AH, where he pursued the study of several transmitted and rational sciences.

This raises the following central research question:

To what extent did Abu Ya‘qub Al-Ouarglani’s journey to Cordoba generate a methodological transformation in his scholarly output, and how does his corpus reflect the rationalist-logic paradigm of Almohad Al-Andalus?*

To address and discuss this central problem, the study asks the following subsidiary questions:

1. What were the socio-intellectual circumstances of al-Ouarglani’s early learning in the Central Maghreb, and what drove his transition to Cordoba?
2. How can we reconstruct al-Ouarglani's academic network and intellectual milieu in Almohad Cordoba given his omission from traditional Maliki-Andalusian biographical dictionaries (kutub al-

tarajim)?

3. What are the concrete textual and methodological indicators within his major surviving works—specifically *Al-Dalil wa al-Burhan* and *Al-Adl wa al-Insaf*—that demonstrate the direct influence of Andalusian rationalism and formal Aristotelian logic?

The Socio-Religious Cradle and Early Scholastic Formation of Abu Ya'qub al-Ouarglani

The foundational phase of Abu Ya'qub Al-Ouarglani's intellectual life was deeply anchored within the religious and scholastic ecosystem of the sub-Saharan oasis of Ouarglan, a vital urban enclave dominated by the Ibadi school of jurisprudence. From his early childhood, Al-Ouarglani was fully immersed in the rigorous institutional networks of religious education administered by the *Halqat al-Azzaba* (the council of Ibadi scholars and social overseers). This structured environment provided an integrated educational framework that successfully synthesized orthodox religious instruction, moral discipline, and foundational academic learning (Benamara and Faizi, 2019, p. 53). His primary instruction followed the classical Maghribi tradition, beginning in the *Kuttab* (Qur'anic school), where he successfully memorized the Holy Qur'an, mastered the fundamentals of Arabic literacy, and acquired the essential principles of Islamic ritual practice.

Upon completing this primary textual introduction, Al-Ouarglani transitioned into the specialized **Halqat** (study circles) conducted within the regional mosques. This secondary stage of learning marked a major shift toward disciplinary specialization, requiring student adherence to established masters (*Shuyukh*). Under their close pedagogical and spiritual guidance, Al-Ouarglani deeply engaged with the complexities of Islamic theology (*Aqida*), applied jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and classical Arabic literature (*Adab*), while simultaneously developing the fundamental skills of theological disputation and dialectical research. The institutional provision of specialized student dormitories, maintained under the strict administrative and spiritual supervision of the *Halqat Al-Azzaba*, further facilitated his undivided devotion to scholarship and spiritual refinement (Benamara and Faizi, 2019, p. 54).

As his academic trajectory progressed into advanced specialized studies, Al-Ouarglani focused his scholarly attention on the intricate dimensions of jurisprudential theory, doctrinal polemics, and the complexities of comparative legal analysis. This rigorous, tiered educational system established a solid intellectual foundation, which ultimately propelled his subsequent journey (Rihla) to the major scholarly centers of al-Andalus. By studying under the premier universal scholars of his era, he was able to return and significantly enrich the legal and intellectual framework of the Central Maghreb (Benamara and Faizi, 2019, pp. 53-54).

III. The Andalusian Sojourn: Intellectual Context and Methodological Transformation

Abu Ya'qub al-Ouarglani's arrival in Cordoba during the mid-sixth century AH (the Almohad era) coincided with a profound shift in the Andalusian scholastic landscape. The Almohad political and intellectual program, heavily influenced by Ibn Tumart's synthesis of Ash'arism and Zahirism, actively promoted rationalism, textual literalism, and the purging of blind imitation (taqlid). It was within this vibrant, highly argumentative milieu that Al-Ouarglani spent over five years (Al-Shamakhi, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 243-244).

While traditional Maghribi and Ibadi accounts celebrate his intellectual triumphs—noting that he established a study circle in the Mosque of Cordoba and earned the moniker "Al-Jahiz of Andalusia" (Al-Darjini, 1974, p. 491; Talai, 1984, pp. 68-72)—Andalusian biographical dictionaries (kutub Al-tarajim) from the Almohad period, such as Ibn Bashkuwal's *Al-Sila* or Ibn Al-Abbar's *Al-Takmila*, conspicuously omit his name.

From a critical historiographical perspective, this silence should not be construed as historical negation. Rather, it reflects the systemic socio-religious biases of the contemporary Maliki-Andalusian chroniclers who routinely overlooked non-Maliki (specifically Ibadi) scholars, or subsumed them under generic geographic descriptions such as "Al-Maghribi" or "Al-Sahrawi".

To reconstruct al-Ouarglani's intellectual network, one must cross-reference his contemporary Andalusian peers who dominated Cordoba's scholastic circles during his stay. Notable among them

were Abu Al-Qasim Ibn Hubaysh (d. 584 AH), the premier traditionist of Cordoba (see: Ibn al-Abbar, *Al-Takmila*, Vol. 1, p. 235, biography no. 652), and Ibn Mada' Al-Qurtubi (d. 592 AH), the chief judge (Qadi Al-Jama'a) known for his radical critique of analogical reasoning in grammar (Ibn al-Abbar, *Al-Takmila*, Vol. 1, p. 188, biography no. 412). The rationalist rigor characterizing Cordoba's intellectual elite—deeply intertwined with the philosophical revivification led by Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520 AH) and Ibn Rushd al-Hafid (d. 595 AH) (see: Ibn Abd al-Malik al-Marrakushi, *Al-Dhayl wa Al-Takmila*, Sifr 5, pp. 85-92)—profoundly reshaped Al-Ouarglani's methodological worldview.

Information on his route and return remains limited; however, sources suggest he may have traveled via Sijilmasa on his way back to the Maghreb (*The Journey of Al-Ouarglani*, 2007, pp. 19-20). His mastery of multiple sciences demonstrates the exceptional depth and duration of this scientific stay (Al-Shamakhi, 2009, vol. 2, p. 125). Upon returning to Ouarglan, he devoted himself entirely to scholarship, rarely leaving his house except for critical interactions with copyists, poets, and book interpreters, until his death in 570 AH / 1175 CE (Al-Darjini, 1974, p. 491).

IV. The Usul Tradition and Sectarian Comparative Analysis: The Impact of Andalusian 'Ilm al-Ikhtilaf on *Kitab Al-Adl wa al-Insaf*

To fully validate the hypothesis of Al-Ouarglani's methodological transformation resulting from his Andalusian stay, one must move beyond superficial biographical narratives and examine the deep structural and polemical anatomy of his jurisprudential masterpiece, *Al-Adl wa al-Insaf fi Usul al-Fiqh wa al-Ikhtilaf*. Prior to his journey to Cordoba, the scholastic landscape and legal discourse within the urban centers of the Central Maghreb and the sub-Saharan oases were predominantly characterized by a conservative preservation of sectarian consensus and localized legal transmissions within the Ibadi school. Legal training and writings primarily revolved around the internal transmission of regional doctrines, short commentaries, and localized legal decrees (Nawazil). However, Al-Ouarglani's direct exposure to the highly contested intellectual battles and rigorous debate circles of Almohad Cordoba prompted a radical departure from this insular framework toward a broader universal

overview. His deliberate choice of the term *Al-Insaf* (equity/fairness) in the title is not merely a stylistic or rhetorical ornament; it directly reflects the specialized nomenclature of Andalusian *Ilm al-Ikhtilaf* (the science of juristic disagreement), which aimed to evaluate legal proofs objectively, completely stripped of partisan prejudice and blind school loyalty (*taqlid*), in order to achieve intellectual harmony (*I'tilaf*) when addressing complex legal problems.

During the sixth century AH, Cordoba was the epicenter of a major juristic and legislative revolution patronized by the Almohad state. This political and intellectual program aggressively sought to dismantle rigid adherence to standard legal sub-branches by reviving the authority of primary textual proofs derived from the Holy Qur'an and the prophetic Sunnah. The Andalusian intellectual milieu at this specific historical juncture was heavily shaped by a cross-pollination between the radical textual literalism of the Hazmian school, which rejected analogical reasoning, and the rationalist *Usul* synthesis introduced by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali through his seminal work, *Al-Mustasfa*. The arrival of Ghazalian methodology in al-Andalus transformed traditional modes of reasoning, syllogistic structures, and debate inside Cordoba's mosques. Immersed in this vibrant environment of debate, al-Ouarglani absorbed these sophisticated critical tools and systematically integrated them within his own legal texts upon his return.

The structural arrangement and argumentative sequence of *Al-Adl wa al-Insaf* provide clear internal textual evidence of this profound Andalusian integration. Rather than merely compiling regional opinions or defending sectarian consensus, Al-Ouarglani reorganizes the jurisprudential discourse into an expansive comparative forum. When addressing foundational principles—such as the authority of consensus (*ijma'*), solitary reports (*Khabar Al-Wahid*), or legal causes (*'Ilal Al-Qiyas*)—he systematically juxtaposes Ibadi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanafi rulings. He subjects these divergent views to rigorous linguistic dissection, textual critique, and strict demonstrative analogies (*Al-Qiyas Al-Burhani*). Furthermore, his advanced methodology incorporates rigorous Hadith validation techniques—such as *Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* (biographical evaluation of

transmitters) and chains of transmission critique—which he absorbed directly from contemporary Cordoban traditionists like Ibn Hubaysh, ensuring that legal rulings are anchored in verified transmissions.

Briefly, his explicit rejection of localized, unverified consensus in favor of dynamic, evidence-based deduction serves as definitive textual proof of his intellectual evolution. By evaluating divergent opinions through an objective, cross-sectarian lens and demanding rigorous proofs before extracting legal judgments, his work demonstrates that his time in Cordoba successfully transformed him from a localized transmitter of regional doctrine into a universalist theoretician capable of engaging with the broader medieval Islamic legal synthesis, making his treatise a monumental advancement in the legal history of the Maghreb.

V. The Encyclopedic Corpus of Abu Ya'qub al-Ouarglani: A Critical Bibliographical Analysis

The intellectual versatility of Abu Ya'qub Al-Ouarglani is profoundly reflected in the immense breadth of his scholarly production. His writings covered both transmitted (naqliyya) and rational (aqliyya) sciences, forming a vital epistemological bridge in the medieval Maghribi tradition.

1. Qur'anic Exegesis (Al-Tafsir)

The monumental commentary on the Holy Qur'an attributed to Al-Ouarglani stands as one of his most significant yet tragic losses to Islamic scholarship. Celebrated for its massive volume and deep textual analysis, its historical existence is verified by Abu al-Qasim al-Barradi in his *Al-Jawahir al-Muntaqat*. Al-Barradi noted that he personally examined a massive single volume of this exegesis in the region of Wadi Righ, which exceeded seven hundred folios and covered only Surah al-Fatiha, al-Baqarah, and Al 'Imran; he subsequently estimated that the complete work must have comprised eight similar volumes (Al-Barradi, n.d., cited in Badjou, n.d., p. 17; Al-Barradi, p. 220). This commentary was highly praised for its sophisticated integration of classical Arabic linguistics, grammatical inflections (i'rab), legal rulings (ahkam), variant readings (qira'at), and the study of abrogation (al-nasikh wa al-mansukh).

The loss of this treatise was deeply lamented by Maghribi scholars; contemporary records state that students of knowledge expressed a willingness to purchase the complete manuscript for fifty gold dinars—a immense fortune at the time—reflecting its high scholarly prestige (Al-Barradi, n.d., cited in Badjou, n.d., p. 17). Furthermore, Abu Ishaq Atfyyish in his *Al-Di'aya ila Sabil al-Mu'minin* indicates that the exegesis originally spanned seventy distinct parts, but was lost due to the geopolitical upheavals and conflicts that swept the medieval Islamic West (Atfyyish, n.d., cited in Badjou, n.d., p. 17; Atfyyish, p. 27).

Although rumors persisted regarding a surviving volume within the manuscript libraries of Rome, researchers have been unable to locate it, leaving it classified as a lost work.

Despite this loss, extensive textual fragments preserved within al-Ouarglani's own *Al-Dalil wa al-Burhan* offer a clear view of his hermeneutical method. His surviving commentaries on the verses of vicegerency (*istikhlaf*), abrogation (*naskh*), and the narrative of the youth in *Surah al-Kahf*—where he meticulously distinguished between the linguistic nuances of *nukr* (the unfamiliar) and *munkar* (the reprehensible)—reveal a mind that balanced traditional narrative exegesis (*al-tafsir bi-al-ma'thur*) with rational critique. His geographical notes concerning the journey of Moses and al-Khidr demonstrate a profound utilization of spatial and empirical data to contextualize the sacred text.

Furthermore, his structural analysis of *Surah Ibrahim* outlines the Qur'anic framework for establishing logical proof and the prophetic methodology of calling to faith through wisdom and demonstrative argument. His analysis also traces the psychological progression of deniers from mockery to explicit threats when failing to counter prophetic proofs (Badjou, n.d., pp. 17–18). In legal exegesis, he evaluated the jurisprudential rulings of the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab regarding the distribution of spoils, and rationally interpreted the "Balance" (*Al-Mizan*) in *Surah al-Rahman* as a metaphor for the intellectual faculty of reason (*al-mizan al-aqli*) through which universal truths are discerned (Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

2. Hadith Methodology and Biographical Evaluation (*Mustalah al-*

Hadith wa al-Rijal)

Al-Ouarglani's engagement with the science of Hadith represents a landmark achievement in the canonization of Ibadi tradition. His primary contribution was the systematic reorganization of the Musnad of Imam al-Rabee' ibn Habib al-Farahidi, the foundational Hadith collection of the Ibadi school. Al-Ouarglani restructured the entire Musnad along thematic jurisprudential chapters (abwab al-fiqh) rather than its original structure based on the names of early transmitters. He further enriched this compilation by appending historical narrations, legal decrees, and the unlinked reports (marasil) of Imam Jabir bin Zayd, creating a unified recension known as Tartib al-Musnad or Al-Jami' al-Sahih. This text became the standard reference for subsequent commentaries and legal derivations. Additionally, he authored a specialized treatise on the biographical evaluation of the transmitters of the Musnad, a surviving fragment of which was recovered in 1992 within the private manuscript libraries of Wadi Mzab (Badjou, n.d., pp. 17–18).

3. Jurisprudential Theory (Usul al-Fiqh)

In the realm of legal theory, Al-Ouarglani authored Al-Adl wa al-Insaf fi Ma'rifat Usul al-Fiqh wa al-Ikhtilaf, which remains an unrivaled masterpiece of comparative legal theory within the Ibadi school. The text received widespread acclaim across the Islamic world, generating a long lineage of commentaries, summaries, and poetic glosses. Conspicuous among these secondary works are Al-Bahth al-Sadiq by Abu al-Qasim al-Barradi, the Mukhtasar by Abu al-Abbas al-Shamakhi along with its extensive commentary, the marginal notes (hashiya) of Ibn Abi Sittah, Raf' al-Tarakhi by al-Talati al-Jerbi, the extensive glosses of Muhammad ibn Yusuf Atfyyish, and Mawarid al-Altaf by the Omani scholar Abu Malik Amir bin Khamis al-Maliki (Badjou, n.d., pp. 17–18).

4. Applied Jurisprudence (Al-Fiqh)

Historical sources confirm that Al-Ouarglani left a significant body of writing dedicated to applied jurisprudence (furu' al-fiqh), though the absolute majority of these texts have not survived. The chronicler Abu al-Abbas Ahmed bin Said al-Shamakhi notes the historical existence of a comprehensive legal volume authored by al-Ouarglani, though he did not specify its exact title or physical dimensions. Al-Shamakhi emphasizes that al-Ouarglani's extensive

juristic answers and legal opinion (fatawa), if systematically compiled, would form an independent compendium of monumental scholarly value, illustrating his high legal authority within the Maghribi scholastic community (Al-Shamakhi, cited in Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

5. Theology and Dialectical Scholasticism (Usul al-Din wa 'Ilm al-Kalam)

Al-Ouarglani's theological fame is anchored in his major surviving three-volume work, *Al-Dalil wa al-Burhan li-Ahl al-Uqul*. This monumental treatise functions as an intellectual encyclopedia, systematically addressing the core tenets of Islamic theology, metaphysics, natural philosophy, logic, mathematics, and a critical doxographical analysis of early Islamic sects. Within this text, Al-Ouarglani also makes reference to another of his theological compositions entitled *Al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*; however, this work has been lost to time (Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

6. Rational Philosophy and Logic (Al-Falsafa wa al-Mantiq)

In the fields of rational philosophy and exact sciences, Al-Ouarglani authored *Marj al-Bahrayn fi 'Ilm al-Mantiq wa al-Hisab wa al-Handasa*, a treatise that demonstrates his deep integration of formal logic, arithmetic, and Euclidean geometry. This work was later appended to the second volume of *Al-Dalil wa al-Burhan*. It was heavily studied and commented upon by al-Shamakhi, and subsequently formed the basis for an extensive, though uncompleted, manuscript commentary by Sheikh Abd al-Aziz al-Tamini entitled *Ta'adhum al-Mawjayn fi Sharh Marj al-Bahrayn*, which remains preserved in manuscript form (Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

7. Historical Chronicles (Al-Tarikh)

Al-Ouarglani is historically credited with authoring a specialized historical chronicle entitled *Futuh al-Maghrib*. The modern historian Hassan Husni Abd al-Wahhab reported, via Sheikh Ibrahim Abu al-Yaqdhan, that he had personally observed this manuscript within the private collection of an unnamed European Orientalist, suggesting its potential preservation within German archival libraries, though this claim remains unverified. The nomenclature of the text varies across references; Abd al-Rahman Bakelli and Adil Nuwayhid refer to it as *Kitab al-Maghrib fi Tarikh al-Maghrib*, whereas the orientalist Joseph Schacht recorded it under

the title *The Great History of Ouargla, Sedrata, and Wadi Righ* (Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

8. Biographies and Historical Documents (Al-Siyar)

According to Abu Ammar Abd al-Kafi, al-Ouarglani composed an extensive analytical commentary on the *Siyar* of Mahbub ibn al-Rahil al-Omani, a historical document of paramount importance to the Ibadi communities of the Mediterranean. However, al-Ouarglani's commentary has not survived and is cataloged among the lost works of the medieval Maghreb (Badjou, n.d., p. 18).

9. Poetic Production (Al-Shi'r)

Beyond his scientific and rational endeavors, Arabic poetry formed an essential aspect of Al-Ouarglani's literary output, despite the fact that the majority of his diwan was scattered across centuries. Abu al-Abbas al-Darjini notes in his *Tabaqat* that he personally examined and read Al-Ouarglani's poetic compendium (diwan), recalling that his own father frequently found solace, literary comfort, and intellectual relief within its verses during times of personal hardship (Al-Darjini, n.d., vol. 2, p. 460).

While Abu al-Abbas al-Shamakhi affirms that al-Ouarglani's poetic output was extensive (Al-Shamakhi, n.d., p. 444), only two major poems have survived to the modern era: *Al-Ba'iyya* and *Al-Hijaziyya*. *Al-Ba'iyya* is a moving 79-verse elegy composed in mourning for his esteemed spiritual master, Abu Sulayman Ayyub bin Ismail, which was preserved in its entirety by al-Darjini (Al-Darjini, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 462–469). *Al-Hijaziyya* is a major literary travelogue composed during his pilgrimage journey to the Hijaz, weaving theological reflections with precise geographical and spatial observations.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, Abu Ya'qub Al-Ouarglani's scholarly journey to Andalusia was a watershed moment that transcended a simple quest for sacred knowledge (*rihla fi talab al-ilm*). It represented a structural bridge between the intellectual developments of Almohad Cordoba and the scholarly communities of the Maghreb al-Awsat. By reading al-Ouarglani's texts through the lens of contemporary Andalusian primary sources—such as Ibn al-Abbar and Al-Marrakushi—we shift the narrative from a localized hagiography to

a critical case study of cross-regional, trans-sectarian intellectual exchange in the medieval Islamic West.

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